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PLENARY SESSIONS
PROBLEMS OF OFFICIAL TRANSLATIONS

Mahesvari Balakrishnan
Graduate, Translator, General Treasury, Ceylon

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by

MAHESVARI BALAKRISHNAN

Graduate Translator, General Treasury, Ceylon

Introduction :

Countries which recently emerged to independence from centuries of Colonial rule are faced with the task of switching over the medium of administration from their erstwhile master's language into their own national languages. In so far as the Tamil speaking people are concerned, we have a common problem, that of switching over the medium of administration from English to Tamil and it is here the translator plays an important role.

Translation as a means of conveying the thoughts and concepts of one language into another is not something novel to us, for we have a long tradition of translating literary and semi-literary works from Sanskrit in the past and in recent years from English and other European languages. Our earliest extent Grammatical work, Tholkaappiyam, speaks of translation (மொழி பெயர்த்து அதர்ப் பட யாத்தல்) as one of the four ways of writing Collateral works (வழி நூல்). This, of course, applies to translation of literary works. Translation of literary works from other languages into Tamil has been done so effortlessly and naturally by competent scholars that it will not be incorrect to say that translation is an art and a fine art at that. In the matter of translating literary works, where the emphasis is on evoking emotional responses, the translator enjoys a certain degree of freedom, and nobody expects him to be cent per cent faithful to the original. In fact, little deviations here and there are not condemned as inaccuracies, but rather commended as the translator's expression of individuality and originality. But the translator of Official documents has no such

freedom. Accuracy should be his watchword, for it is his duty to ensure that the exact meaning of the original is conveyed in his translation, nothing less and nothing more. This is no easy task. The difficulty is all the more pronounced when the translator handles documents of a legal nature as for example Administrative Regulations, Financial Regulations, etc. Here the intended meaning of the original text should not be distorted even by a hair's breadth.

Difficulties in Translating :

Let us for a moment consider why this type of translation should present difficulties to the translator. In my view when the national languages are called upon to express a body of knowledge which is not part of their culture, they become incapable of conveying the exact ideas and thoughts. This incapability becomes more and more pronounced as this body of knowledge grows in magnitude. The national languages of the countries which gained independence a few years ago, have been long neglected in the sphere of administration and hence they are not developed adequately. When the switch over is effected, the machinery and the technique of administration remain the same; only the media are changed. This change is brought about by translation and translation alone. The translator is expected to do wonders over night and his task therefore is an unenviable one. Our tradition has been hitherto to carry on the administration in English and now we are translating in toto those concepts into Tamil.

Grammatical Difficulties :

It is said that the 'genius' of each language is different and it is here that the translator's difficulties arise. The translator meets with two different levels of linguistic structure. One is the grammatical structure and the other is the lexical structure. The two levels are nevertheless inter-related in that both have to account for the choices involved in the selection of the written language. The difference between the two levels, grammar and vocabulary, lies in the fact that the choices they are dealing with are of different

kinds. That is, grammar deals with the system of relatively small number of possible choices while the vocabulary is concerned with a larger set of possibilities. The grammatical structure of English differs from the grammatical structure of Tamil. A compound sentence in English with all its qualifying clauses is difficult to be translated without the meaning being somewhat altered. Dividing it up into shorter sentences may tend to alter the meaning and may not appear to be quite relevant. In particular legal expressions cannot in any way be altered for fear that the meaning too would be altered. But in translating such a sentence into Tamil the translator normally starts with the last phrase or clause in the sentence, works his way upwards and ends with the principal clause. In such translations, the sequence of ideas gets somewhat interrupted and the whole sentence tends to get disorganised as a result.

Let us take for example an agreement which reads as follows:—

> "This agreement entered into on the dates hereinafter mentioned between...........of.........of the one part and...........hereinafter referred to as..............which term shall mean and include the said.................and his successors for the time being holding the said office of.........................and all other officers for the time being holding office as..............(acting for and on behalf of the Government of Ceylon), of the other part, ...",

when translated would read as follows:—

> இதனகத்துப் பின்னர் குறிப்பிடப்படும் தேதிகளில் ....ஐச் சேர்ந்த........................ என்பவர் முதலாம் பகுதியாகவும், இதனகத்துப் பின்னர்......................எனக் குறிப்பிடப் படும் (இப்பதம் இலங்கை அரசாங்கத்துக்காகவும் அதன் சார்பிலும் கடமை செய்யும் சொல்லப் பட்ட..........................என்பவரையும் ....என்னும் பதவியை அப் பொழுதைக்கு வகிக்கும் அவருக்குப் பின்வருவோ ரையும்............................ஆகப் பதவி

வகிக்கும் மற்றெல்லா உத்தியோகத்தரையும் குறிக்கும்)..என்பவர் மறுபகுதியாகவும் செய்யப்படும் இந்த உடன் படிக்கையானது,

The Clause which starts with " which term.................... " cannot find a place in the translation in the exact form of the original. The translator here has no other alternative but to put it within brackets close to the noun it qualifies to avcid unnecessary implications with the result that the order and the arrangement of the expressions and ideas of the original are not represented in the same way in the translation.

The arrangement of the syntactical structure sometimes unavoidably produces meaningless expressions. An example like " The order No. 83 dated October 1st, 1955 and published in Government Gazette No. 1087 of October 7th, 1955 as amended subsequently is hereby further amended; " when translated, would be

பின்னர் திருத்தப்பட்டவாறு 1955 ஒற்ரோபர் 7 ஆந் தேதி கொண்ட 10847 ஆம் இல. அரசாங்க வர்த்தமானியில் வெளியிடப்பட்ட 83 ஆம் இல. கட்டளையானது இத்தால் மேலுந் திருத்தப்படுகின்றது.

The translation starts with the Tamil version of " as amended subsequently ", which appears meaningless at first sight.

The meaning it conveys will be evident only when the whole sentence has been read and understood. The syntactical structure of the English Language is so flexible that the speaker can go on expanding a sentence as much as he likes by the addition of clauses and phrases after stating the subject whereas this possibility is limited in Tamil owing to its different syntactical structure. The natural flow of thought that is found in the English expression is in sharp contrast to the language of the translation where the flow of expression is greatly hampered.

Another difficulty that a translator often meets is when he is forced to begin a sentence with a pronoun and finally come to the

noun it refers to. Here again I would like to illustrate this point by an example.

The sentence,

> "The Financial Regulations of the Government of Ceylon is a subject that has been assigned to the Minister of Finance by the Prime Minister acting under the powers vested in him by the Ceylon (Constitution and Independence) Orders in Council 1946, 1947".

has been translated as,

> *இலங்கை அரசாங்கத்தின் நிதிப்பிரமாணங்கள் என்பது 1946 ஆம் 1947 ஆம் ஆண்டு இலங்கை (அரசமைப்பும் சுதந்திரமும்) அரசவைக் கட்டளை யினால் தமக்கு உரித்தாக்கப்பட்ட அதிகாரத்தின் பிரகாரம் செயலாற்றும் பிரதம அமைச்சரால் நிதி யமைச்சருக்கு ஒப்படைக்கப்பட்டுள்ள ஒரு விடய மாகும்.*

Here the pronoun *தமக்கு* precedes its antecedent which is not quite logical. This type of construction is artificial and unpalatable to the intelligent reader. If the sentence is broken up, the translation will be more or less a paraphrase, and the compactness of expression intended by the original will be lost.

It is natural that when new forms of expressions are translated into Tamil a new style of writing too tends to occur which at times becomes very artificial and perhaps monstrous. In English prepositions and conjunctions are separate words but in Tamil they are glued on to the nouns and verbs. This agglutinative nature of the Tamil language presents another problem to the translator. Very often we find expressions with "and/or" for example—

> "Savings in the same sub-head and/or other sub-heads of the same vote."

The translation will have to be in one of the following two ways:

1. *அதே வாக்குப்பணத்தின் அதே உப தலைப்பிலும் பிற உப தலைப்புக்களிலும் அல்லது அதே உப தலைப்பில் அல்லது பிற உப தலைப்புக்களில் உள்ள சேமிப்பு.*

2. அதே வாக்குப்பணத்தின் அதே உப தலைப்பில் அல்லது பிற உப தலைப்புக்களில் அல்லது இவ் விரண்டிலுமுள்ள சேமிப்பு.

In the first translation repetition of phrases becomes rather confused, the clarity of expressions is lost, and the idea is not expressed in the same lucid, terse style of the original.

Inadequacy of the Vocabulary :

The second difficulty is the lexical structure or the vocabulary of the national languages. In this connection, I would like to point out that in the preface to the Oxford Dictionary, it is stated that it was compiled and edited from materials amounting to over five million quotations and that nearly half a million words are recorded with more than one and a half million illustrative quotations. In contrast, the entire Tamil Lexicon comprises of 1,04,405 words with a collection of about 20,000 words published as a supplement. In short the English Language has the pride of possessing a vocabulary comprising of four times the number of Tamil words. The reason for this growth is not because of any intrinsic and exceptional properties in the grammatical structure of the English language but simply because it has developed over a long period of time the necessary vocabulary for the various branches of knowledge with distinctive and precise definitions, whereas the Tamil language during this period remained static in certain fields of development—particularly in the administrative field. Thus in upholding the view that the Tamil language is deficient as a medium of administration, what is meant is that the vocabulary now available is not adequate to cope with the rising needs and demands of the new notions, and not that the whole structure of the language is deficient and inadequate. This deficiency may be illustrated by a few examples:—

Very often one meets in Official documents words such as *project; plan; scheme and programme.* All these words are usually translated into Tamil by the one word திட்டம். The subtle difference in meaning that is found in each of the English words is not reflected in the Tamil word திட்டம் at all,

and the confusion is worse confounded when two or more of these English terms occur in one and the same sentence. For example, in a sentence like "These items should be presented in the form of a programme/project and activity classification," the words "programme" and "project" occur side by side and it would be impossible to use the word திட்டம் for both. Hence to surmount this difficulty, the translation is done as follows:—

இவ்விடயங்கள் நிகழ்ச்சித் திட்ட/முயற்சித் திட்ட வடிவிலும் செயன்முறைப் பாகுபாட்டு வடிவிலும் சமர்ப்பிக்கப்படுதல் வேண்டும்.

But the word முயற்சித் திட்டம் was not used elsewhere when the word "project" occurred alone and as a result the reader will be perplexed here by the introduction of this new word முயற்சித் திட்டம் for translating "project." Hence, the reader in desperation has to resort to the original English version to understand the translation. In such a circumstance the whole purpose of the translation becomes meaningless and ridiculous.

In official documents, one finds words such as present, submit, produce, furnish, table, occurring frequently in different contexts. In such a context each word has a different shade of meaning. But in rendering them into Tamil all these words are often translated as சமர்ப்பித்தல் irrespective of their context. I shall illustrate this point by giving a few examples:

Presenting the claim—கோரிக்கை சமர்ப்பித்தல்.

Submitting the voucher—உறுதிச் சீட்டுச் சமர்ப்பித்தல்.

Producing the receipt—பற்றுச் சீட்டுச் சமர்ப்பித்தல்.

Furnishing proof—சான்று சமர்ப்பித்தல்.

Tabling the bill in Parliament—பாராளுமன்றத்தில் சட்ட மூலம் சமர்ப்பித்தல்.

These are not the only examples that baffle a translator of official documents. When verbs like *allow, sanction, permit, authorise* occur in a report, the translator has only the word அனுமதி *anumathi* in hand to *substitute* for all of them. Similarly, *in respect*

of, officer *concerned in relation to,* amount *involved,* person *in question* are all translated by the one Tamil word சம்பந்தப்பட்ட. There are many more such examples where the translator is forced to repeat himself however unwilling he may be and aware of the fact that he is committing the offence of repetition (கூறியது கூறுங் குற்றம்).

The role of language in administration is of utmost importance and clear thinking and correct use of words are very essential. There are instances when even the knowledge of words as well as the idioms may not help us in understanding some sentences, the comprehension of which demands a general acquintance with the modes of thought peculiar to the language, and a special acquintance in the context. For instance in a sentence like " Marginal relief should be provided in the form of a tapering allowance...." when the phrase " marginal relief " is translated as எல்லை நிவாரணம் (as found in the glossary) it is doubtful whether the proposition expressed in that phrase is expressed clearly in the translation, though we may know everything about the words which form the phrase.

The richness of certain words in their association is such that the ideas of the original can in no way be adequately represented in translation. In such cases the use of parallelisms may help to convey the meaning. For example " *Visiting Fellowship* at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford. has been offered by the United Kingdom ....".

The translation of Visiting Fellowship would be பார்வையிடும் இணையுரிமைப் பரிசு.

In these contexts the translator will have to dive into the ocean of Tamil literature to scan for parallelisms. But unfortunately the translator of official documents has no such time hanging in his hands to do a research at the spur of the moment. He should be well equipped with reference books or translation aids for an immediate translation. A dictionary of idioms and phrases, containing such parallelisms, will prove very handy to the translator.

When the concept of an expression has different background, even the nearest equivalent in Tamil may not give the same meaning to the reader of the translation as compared with the reader of the original. In expressions like " filed or record ", " covering sanction ", " body of the voucher ", " posted up to date ", the ideas they convey cannot be adequately conveyed in the translation because of their different background of thought.

Let me give the translations for these expressions:

Filed or record—பதிவிற்காகக் கோப்புச் செய்தல்.

Covering sanction—தழுவு அனுமதி.

On the body of the voucher—உறுதிச் சீட்டிலேயே.

Posted up to date—அற்றைவரை பதிதல்.

The background of the original English terms plays a great part and any literal translation defeats its purpose. As each language has modes of thought peculiar to it owing to historical and other reasons it means that in effecting the transition we cannot always substitute words for words or ideas of the original.

Measures to remedy the Inadequacy :

In the translation of literary matter, the translator has the liberty to omit a few words or add a few of his own. He has to translate ideas rather than words. But in the case of official translations every word of the original has to be translated for each word has its significance. In a Cabinet Memorandum for instance, each word has to be translated, the style, emphasis and spirit maintained, and the subject matter as a whole presented in the exact form of the original.

Since the vocabulary of a language could be enlarged as much as the writer needs, this deficiency in the language could be remedied. The relative flexibility of the vocabulary is a common feature of all languages. The fact that English has a vast vocabulary does not indicate that this is due to any intrinsic virtue of the English language, but only points out the conscious effort

on the part of its speakers to enrich their language. Thus our aim today should be to expand and enrich the vocabulary of Tamil so that it also could become a powerful instrument in any sphere of activity. If Tamil is to be the language of administration one must create the necessary terminology for the expression of the relevant nuances of meaning.

Here arises the question as to how suitable terminology could be created. There are three ways of enriching the vocabulary to meet the present day requirements. They are (i) resuscitating archaic and obsolete words, (ii) coining new words and phrases, and (iii) borrowing words from other languages.

(i) **Resuscitating Archaic and Obsolete Words :**

The words which are already in the Tamil language and which are no longer in currency can be brought back to life if they are adequate to express the meaning of modern technical terms. For example the word பூட்கை occurring in the Sangam Classics can very appropriately be taken as an equivalent of "policy". Another word found in epigraphy which could be adopted for official use is *vaariyam (வாரியம்)* for an office in charge. (This is found in South Indian Inscription (iii), 80). The word *vaariyan (வாரியன்)* could be used for a supervisor or superintendent and *vaariyapperumakkalh* வாரியப் பெருமக்கள் for city fathers. *(ஊராமை செய்யும் வாரியப் பெருமக்களாமே,* S.I.I.i, *117).* Again there are a number of technical terms pertaining to the sphere of administration found in the Tamil inscriptions of Chola and Pandya Kings. For example the word திணைக்களம் occurring in these inscriptions can be used for department, for which term various equivalents such as பகுதி இலாகா, துறை are indiscriminately used at present. I am glad to mention here that this word is now gaining currency in Ceylon, being given as an equivalent of Department in the official glossary and it is being used by most of the government departments. All such words of a technical nature should be collected from Tamil epigraphy and put to fresh use. Some of these obsolete words may sometimes be adopted with slight modifications to signify new ideas.

A thorough search into the lexical matter contained in the Tamil metrical dictionaries *(நிகண்டுகள்)* such as *திவாகரம், பிங்கலந்தை, சூடாமணி* will yield fruitful results. Also a critical study of little known Tamil literature on metaphysics சித்தர் பாடல், medicines வைத்திய நூல், astronomy சோதிட நூல் etc. will yield a considerable vocabulary which can be suitably pressed into service today. To make the best use of the lexical matter already in the Tamil language a " Thesaurus of Tamil Words and Phrases" on the lines of Roget's Thesaurus of English words and phrases should be compiled by a body of competent scholars. I would suggest that the I.A.T.R. should undertake this laborious task in addition to its multifarious activities.

(ii) **Coining of New Words and Phrases :**

Coining of new words and phrases arise when one is very sure that there is no equivalent already in the language and to determine that requires deep scholarship. There are so many haphazardly coined and arbitrarily used terms in the newspapers and ill-digested translations of today.

Papers are found using words like *ராஜினமா* for resignation; *கலால் இலாகா* for Excise Department, *மனுதார்* for prosecution and *ஜரூர்* for readiness and *ரத்து* for cancel. English words like *district*, *Committee*, *Commission*, *Union* are transliterated instead of being translated. The newspapers have the power to popularise these inaccurate and inelegant words among the semiliterate people A competent body such as the I.A.T.R. should therefore devise ways and means of cleansing the language of these unsavoury elements.

New words can be coined from Tamil roots and bases for expressing almost all the modern ideas and the Tamil language has the vitality and flexibility to adopt itself to any changing condition. It is especially rich in *uriccol* உரிச்சொல் and *iTaiccol* இடைச் சொல் which go in the building of words. The *uriccol* are actually the bases from which nominal and verbal forms are derived by the additions of appropriate particles *(இடைச்சொல்)* which are

copious in Tamil. Again, as a preliminary step to help the coining of new words all the word forming elements (i.e. உரிச்சொல் and இடைச்சொல்) in the Tamil language should be collected, classified and defined.

The newly coined words should be short, apt and easily pronounceable. Nominal forms should lend themselves freely for declension and for continuing with other words to form compounds. If one examines the words in the Tamil language, one will find that the vast majority of them are monosyllabic or dissyllabic conforming to the patterns காசு, நாள், மலர் and பிறப்பு. Very few words consists of more than three syllables. Dissyllabic words preponderate over the others. In coining new words one should always keep this principle in mind.

(iii) **Borrowing words from other Languages :**

Only when the possibilities and potentialities of the Tamil language are exhausted one should turn to a foreign language to borrow words. *The Sanskrit language has been for centuries a source for borrowing words into Tamil, and such words which have thus gained currency in the Tamil language need not be looked down upon if they really serve to enrich the language.* Today English can very well take the place of Sanskrit in the matter of enriching Tamil, particularly in the sphere of Science and Technology. When words are borrowed from foreign languages, they should conform to the phonetic principles of Tamil and such loan words should be so naturalised as to be indistinguishable from pure Tamil words.

Indiscriminate borrowing should be guarded against as it is injurious to the normal development of the language. Language after all is not a dead thing, but can be likened to a living organism. Any foreign matter entering the organism will be rejected and may prove fatal if it is not properly assimilated. In this connection, what has been said of the English language by the author of King's English can apply to Tamil as well with equal force if not greater:

> " All words not English in appearance are in English writing ugly and not pretty...............Anyone who wishes to

become a good writer should endeavour to prefer the Saxon word to the Romance (foreign)..............The writer whcse percentage of Saxon words is high will generally be found to have fewer words that are out of the way, long or abstract and fewer periphrases than another." (King's English—*Fowler*).

The necessary for a Bureau of translation :

In translation for Official purposes every designation has to be given a separate equivalent. Designation of officers, like Presidents Chairman, Principal, Director are very often translated by a single Tamil word as அதிபர். Though each of these terms could be translated with different words, yet uniformity in usage has not been achieved. Wherever Tamil is the language of Administration it is advisable and desirable too, that uniformity in respect of Official designations be maintained. It is no doubt very difficult for translators to keep pace with the advancement of knowledge in English, and until we learn to think and work adequately in our language, we have to depend on translation. Hence a bureau for translation is a *sine qua non.* This can be set up in India comprising of representatives from all countries which need its advice.

The function of this body, *inter alia*, should be to settle some of the urgent needs of the translator. Glossaries of technical terms have been published in Ceylon and India, but uniformity in the selection of equivalents has not been maintained.

To illustrate my point I give below a few official terms and their Tamil equivalents found in some glossaries published in Ceylon as well as in South India. The numerals by the side of the equivalents indicate the glossaries consulted for this purpose, which are as follows:—

1. Glossary of Official Terms and Phrases in Tamil (Official Language Department, Ceylon, 1959).
   அரசகருமச் சொற்றொகுதி.
2. Tamil equivalents of English Terms (Madras, 1936)
   கலைச் சொற்கள்.

3. Tamil equivalents of English Terms (Madras, 1938).
   கலைச் சொற்கள்.
4. List of Technical and Scientific Terms (Government of Madras, 1947).
   கலைச் சொற்கள்.
5. A Dictionary of English, Tamil Terms in Administration (Madras, 1949).
   ஆட்சிச் சொல் அகரவரிசை.
6. Tamil Administrative Terms (Madras, 1962).
   தமிழ் ஆட்சிச் சொற்கள்.
7. A Classified English Tamil Dictionary (Madras, 1962).
   பலபொருள் ஆங்கிலத் தமிழ் அகரவரிசை.

EQUIVALENTS

Administration—

1. நிருவாகம், ஆட்சி.
2. ஆளுகை, ஆட்சிமுறை, அரசியல் முறை.
3. ஆளுகை, அரசியல் முறை.
4. நிர்வாகம்.
5. ஆட்சி, ஆளுகை.
6. —
7. ஆட்சி.

(Another word used in the press and in official translations—பரிபாலனம்)

Board—

1. சபை, பலகை.
2. கழகம்.
3. போர்டு, கழகம், குழு.
4. போர்டு.
5. கழகம், வாரியம், பலகை.
6. பலகை, மன்றம் (Board of Revenue-வருவாய்ப் பலகை)
7. ஆயம்.

Certificate—

1. சான்றிதழ்.
2. தகுதித்தாள்.
3. தகுதித்தாள்.
4. அத்தாட்சிப் பத்திரம், தகுதிப் பத்திரம்.
5. உறுதிச்சீட்டு, தகுதித்தாள், சான்றிதழ்.
6. சான்றிதழ்.
7. சான்றிதழ்.

Department—

1. திணைக்களம்.
2. துறை.
3. துறை, பகுதி, இலாகா.
4. —
5. துறை.
6. துறை.
7. —

Document—

1. சாதனம், ஆவணம்.
2. பத்திரம், சான்று.
3. சான்று, ஆவணம், பத்திரம்.
4. —
5. ஆவணம், சான்று.
6. —
7. உரிமைப் பத்திரம், ஆவணம்.

Licence—

1. உத்தரவுச் சீட்டு.
2. அடை.
3. அனுமதி, அடை.
4. அனுமதிச்சீட்டு.
5. உரிமையாணை.
6. உரிமம்.
7. உரிமையாணை, உரிமம்.

Parliament—

1. பாராளுமன்றம்.
2. பார்லிமென்று.
3. பார்லிமென்று.
4. பார்லிமெண்டு.
5. —
6. பாராளுமன்றம்.
7. —

(Another word used in the Tamil press—நாடாளுமன்றம்)

Pension—

1. உபகாரச் சம்பளம்.
2. உதவிச் சம்பளம்.
3. —
4. —
5. சம்பளம், உதவிச் சம்பளம்.
6. ஓய்வு ஊதியம்.
7. ஓய்வு ஊதியம்.

Treasury—

1. திறைசேரி.
2. கருவூலம்.
3. கருவூலம்.
4. பொக்கிஷம்.
5. கருவூலம்.
6. கருவூலம்.
7. கருவூலம்.

Voucher—

1. உறுதிச்சீட்டு.
2. —
3. உறுதிச்சீட்டு, ஆதரவுச்சீட்டு.
4. —
5. கைச்சீட்டு, உறுதிச்சீட்டு.
6. செலவுச் சீட்டு.
7. செலவுச் சீட்டு.

A cursory glance of the equivalents given in the various glossaries and dictionaries will show that there is no fixity of meaning for most of them. They are used rather arbitrarily and indiscriminately in translations today. As a result no Tamil translation of an Official document at present can achieve the precision and exactitude which we find in the English original. Standardisation of Tamil equivalents is therefore an urgent need of the hour. A bureau as suggested must be able to publish standard glossaries as guides for the use of the translator so that uniformity may be achieved wherever Tamil is used as language of administration. I would like to mention here the very commendable work of Tamil Valarchi Kalagam (தமிழ் வளர்ச்சிக் கழகம்) in producing the First Modern Tamil Encyclopædia in 9 volumes; thousands of equivalents have been used by the compilers of this monumental work. In my opinion it would have been a great help to the translator, if a supplement volume of index and glossary is added for easy reference. Such a glossary should contain all the scientific and technical terms used in the body of the text in the form of an English Tamil dictionary.

Secondly, the bureau should be able to provide a key for transliteration. In adopting foreign words which have gained currency, they should be naturalised, and made to conform to the phonetic rules of Tamil so that they become part of the language. For example, the word " rubber " is written variously in India and Ceylon as இறப்பர் and இரப்பர் and றப்பர், ரப்பர். The forms இறப்பர் and இரப்பர் are criticised as conveying unsavoury meanings and hence avoided by some. But the words றப்பர் and ரப்பர் do not conform to the phonetic rules as the letters ற, ர cannot be used initially. In the case of proper nouns a certain amount of faithfulness to the original is desired. But in the case of other words the simple natural and elegant garb of the Tamil damsel is to be preferred to the incongruous, grotesque, dazzling make-up of the foreigner. Many types of such difficulties could be ironed out only by an authoritative body.

A standard dictionary of administrative terms in Tamil is an urgent need of the translator which the bureau could undertake

to publish. Tamil language is not confined to a single political unit, and as this Conference would bear witness, Tamil could very well attain the status of an International language, at least in South-East Asia. Hence there is need for a standard Tamil comparable to the standard English—an idiom which will be acceptable to all. Tamil scholars should rise above all regional or national prejudices and work to attain this goal. The I.A.T.R. in my opinion is the only body that could take upon itself this great responsibility of making Tamil an adequate vehicle of administration.

Hoe & Co., Madras-1,